



NORTH AMERICAN CENTER FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT AND TRAUMA RESPONSE

3049 - 34th St. N
Lethbridge, AB, T1H 7C4
Canada

5415 W. Higgins Ave.
Chicago, IL 69630
United States

www.nactatr.com

hello@nactatr.com

Canada (403) 394-9468

Toll-free (833) 622-8287

Fax (403) 388-0454

A primary flaw in the fields of threat assessment and general violence risk assessment is the assumption that the pathway to violence is similar for most male perpetrators. However, our work in the fields of violent extremism and gender-based violence indicate that ten people can engage in the same act of violence for ten different reasons. In order to successfully address violence prevention there must be a more comprehensive, data-driven, and trauma-informed process for violence risk assessment and intervention that is case-specific rather than the ambiguous classifications of “low”, “moderate” or high” risk to engage in a violent act that are pervasive now. In the Canadian context, the North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response (NACTATR) has led out in data-driven and trauma-informed assessments and interventions. Although our comprehensive assessment processes and related community protocols in Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) are well known at the municipal and provincial (territorial) government levels, many members of the federal government are less aware of our pioneering work.

In the aftermath of many high-profile acts of violence against women and citizens in general, like the recent hate-related killings in London, Ontario, many ponder what “causes” someone to engage in such overt acts of violence. Mr. J. Kevin Cameron, Executive Director of NACTATR and Dr. Marleen Wong of the University of Southern California introduced the concept of the “Trauma-Violence Continuum” over a decade ago which denotes that while serious violence can beget trauma, unresolved trauma can also beget serious violence. This includes the effects of a broad range of traumatic experiences from child abuse in all of its’ forms, to victims of community violence, as well as those exposed to non-violent related tragedies like car crashes and natural disasters who did not receive adequate aftermath support. As such, the fields of Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) and Crisis/Trauma Response are inseparably connected. Therefore, as relates to violence against women and violent extremism, one of the best violence prevention tools must also include skillful trauma response practices focused on boys and men. In part, some family dynamics and societal constraints have prevented boys and men from being free to experience “natural human responses to grief, loss and trauma”. At the core of many violent acts are trauma-generated and family-generated pathologies being projected onto others

In VTRA we state that “you can only engage in a serious act of violence towards a target, or type of target, you feel justified in attacking”. That means that so-called random acts of violence are not so random. Even if a perpetrator does not know the target(s) personally, the target(s) is a symbolic representation of the “type of person” or people they want to harm. To the Muslim community, the Indigenous community, the Black Community, the LGBTQ+ community and others, the realization that “it could have been me” is understood. Being a woman in these communities adds an additional layer of vulnerability.

All VTRA and Crisis/Trauma Response practices must be multidisciplinary. We have clearly demonstrated though many Canadian initiatives that collaborative protocols between agencies and government ministries allow for swift and comprehensive data-driven assessment that result in data-driven interventions. This includes initiatives in VTRA with governments from:

- Province of British Columbia
- Province of New Brunswick
- Province of Saskatchewan
- Government of Yukon



NORTH AMERICAN CENTER FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT AND TRAUMA RESPONSE

And municipal programs such as:

- Surrey Wrap Youth Gang Prevention Program
- City of Toronto FOCUS Tables
- Hundreds of Municipal VTRA Protocols
- Provincial Organizations such as the Aboriginal Women's Shelters of Ontario
- Others.

As a witness to the "Standing Committee on the Status of Women" we respectfully submit the following recommendations for consideration: `

1. That the Federal Government provide leadership to enhance already existing community protocols for Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) to specifically include gender-based violence and violent extremism. Too many Canadian "Community VTRA Protocols" are used for child and youth cases, while professionals hesitate to proceed on adult cases because of a lack of confidence that freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation will support them in their violence prevention actions.
2. That the Federal Government promote the training and development of "Community VTRA Protocols" in regions that do not currently engage in the practice.
3. That the Federal Government support training and development of community protocols for comprehensive Crisis/Trauma Response with a special focus on boys and men. As noted above, some family dynamics and societal constraints have prevented boys and men from being free to experience "natural human responses to grief, loss and trauma". At the core of many violent acts are trauma-generated and family-generated pathologies, being projected on others, by boys and men with undiagnosed or unresolved trauma.
4. That the Federal Government, in collaboration with Provincial and Territorial Governments, encourage the review of the "Interim Guidelines for a Whole-Community Response to Post-Pandemic Mental Health" and promote high-level post-pandemic collaboration as outlined in the above document. This includes enhancing the work on the effects of quarantine and the "Impaired Closeness-Distance Cycle" as it relates to uncovering family and gender-based violence that has already occurred but not been disclosed, to prevent the wave of additional domestic, relational and intimate partner violence likely to follow without intervention. This includes the application of VTRA processes for assessing individuals on a pathway to violent extremism.